Bubmitted by Samantha Harkins









May 12, 2010



We couldn't agree more with recent comments from the media industry, including the Feb. 21 Grand Rapids Press editorial, about the importance of having open and transparent local governments. Allowing local units of government to publish legal notices online is not only a significant cost savings for communities and taxpayers, while increasing the transparency of government. It would allow more individuals and corporations to see what the local governments are doing. Newspaper readership is significantly down. According to an AARP poll this month, fewer than three in 10 adults read a print newspaper every day. A majority of Americans receive their news via television and a third of those ages 18-49 get most of their news online.

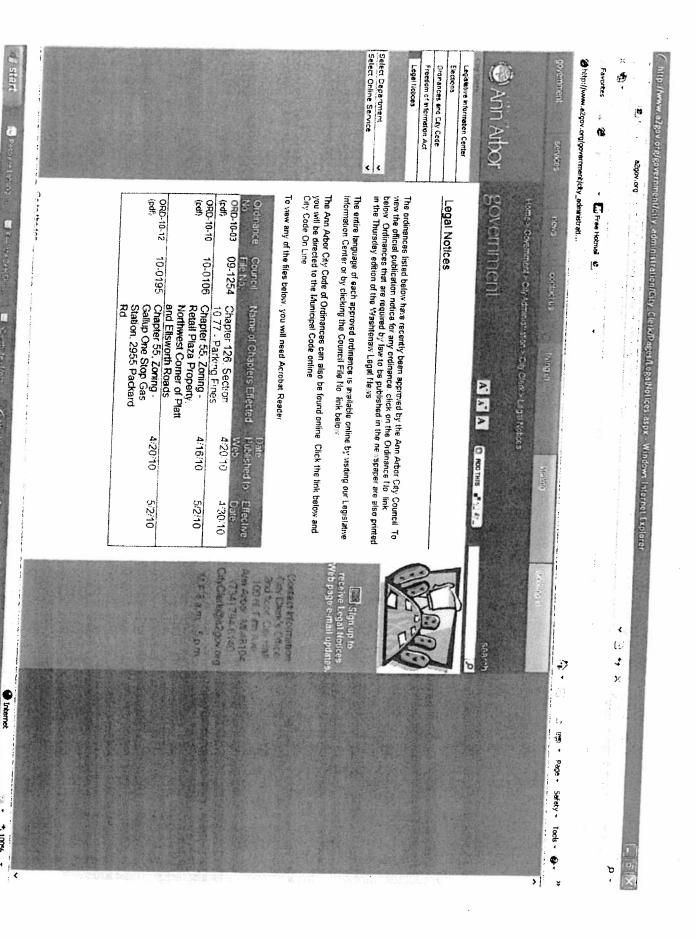
The simple fact shown by these numbers is that Americans get their news differently than they did even a decade ago. As a result, HBs 5845, 5847, 5848, 5853, 5916 and 5917 are sensible first steps in ensuring that public notices are viewable by a larger audience and more available to the general public. These bills would require local units of government to post legal notices in a clerk's office and in another medium such as Internet or television. Internet search engines, such as Google and Yahoo, make it far more likely that people will find and read these legal notices when posted online.

Newspapers nationwide are struggling with many going out of business and countless others decreasing the number of days they are publishing. Most notably in Michigan, the Ann Arbor news ceased publishing last summer. Other Michigan newspapers including The Flint Journal, The Saginaw News and The Bay City Times have reduced publications to three or four days a week. This leaves local units of government with fewer publication options, and it leaves the public not knowing where to find public notices.

In addition, to better manage declining revenues, many local government clerks have been forced to publish notices in alternative publications with lower subscription and advertising rates and much smaller audiences. As a result, the current publication requirement is actually limiting the number of people who see these notices.

Newspaper publication requirements cost local governments and taxpayers millions of dollars every year. For example, a poll of around 100 municipalities across Michigan found that they spent \$1.2 million on legal notices. This doesn't even include the amount spent by townships and counties. Unfortunately, with property tax revenue declining and state revenue sharing dollars being cut, funding must be prioritized for essential government services – police and fire protection, roads, sewers and other infrastructure projects.

This legislation isn't about being anti-transparency or anti-newspaper. Quite to the contrary: This Legislation expands public access to legal notices. This is a common sense change in response to the way we receive our news and the economic situation that plagues our local units.



State Saturday

Section 1

B Programme Com

●かつうく・10日本出版:

×100%



www.theleslieweeklyguardian.com
Jennifer M. Shuster
Publisher
P.O. Box 22
Leslie, MI 49251
(517) 878-8006

May 11, 2010

House Committee:

My name is Jennifer Shuster and I am the publisher of an online only community newspaper serving the community of Leslie, Michigan. I also serve as member of the Leslie City Council, therefore, I am fully aware of the high expense municipalities have and continue to endure in order to publish their legal notices.

I am proud to stand with the Michigan Municipal League in their efforts to make it permissible for municipalities to publish their legal notices through online media sources. My online newspaper, The Leslie Weekly Guardian, has been recognized as the very first online only newspaper to join the Michigan Press Association. This accomplishment has paved the way for other online news media which can operate their businesses in a more financially stable manner without the burden of printing and distribution costs. This savings is then passed on to advertisers and, hopefully with your approval, municipalities, townships and even school districts who need to publish legal notices.

I hope the State of Michigan will continue to support this trend by allowing legal notices to be published online. This will result in a tremendous cost savings for local government entities and financial security for online news sources that strive to provide up to date news information. It is a win-win situation for everyone involved.

Thank you for your time and consideration!

Sincerely,

Jennifer Shuster Publisher

The Leslie Weekly Guardian